THE MORAL RESURRECTION OF NO. 3927.

AN EASTER STORY

BY A. A. SMITH.

For the second time in his checkered career Marion Burnham was at pointed variance with the mighty power known as public opinion, and for the second time he was getting the worst of the controversy. The occasion of his first disagreement with the all powerful factor in human affairs before which potentates tremble had been altogether of his own seeking. His second variance was but the logical sequence of his first indiscretion and the result of circumstances which had passed entirely beyond his control.

Public opinion as crystallized into the machinery of the courts had decreed that for the protection of society Marion Burnham should retire for a stated period of time into the seclusion of the state penitentiary, there to meditate upon the consequences of his transgression while laboring for the state and serve as an impressive warning to all would be evildoers. Aided and abetted by his lawyer, Marion had duly resisted this movement of public opinion to the bitter end, but after he was incarcerated and had improved the ample opportunities afforded him for reflection of a reminiscent nature he was forced to admit that opinion was right and he was wrong, for to the best of a recollection considerably clouded by the absorption of a particularly villainous brand of the Kansas specific for most human ailments he undeniably had been guilty of certain irregular proceedings whereby the private funds of his employer were devoted to the payment of his own pressing debts.

BURNHAM WATCHED THE WORSHIPERS THRONGING PAST.

The justice of his punishment thus acknowledged, the optimistic and somewhat philosophical nature of the prisoner caused him to devote the period of his forced retirement to the work of squaring accounts with society rather than indulging in useless repining. The theory of reformatory punishment was that it balanced accounts with one's fellow men and left the punished free to begin anew, purged of the taint of his former life. Therefore No. 3927 entered with zeal into the spirit of the system. He became the model prisoner of the institution. He wanted to make amends for the past and live usefully in the future. It was in no vague or poetic sense that he thought of reformation and atonement. He meant it, and in the dead, crushing monotony of his prison existence he took the first hard steps in the process of his regeneration.

It was therefore with surprise and distress that No. 3927, once more Marion Burnham, found upon returning to his native town that public opinion was not inclined to take his view of his case. It did not cast into the scale the weight of his punishment against that of his wrongdoing and thereby balance the account between himself and society. On the contrary, it added the weight of those dreary days and nights in the penitentiary to that of his own sinful folly, and the balance was hopelessly against him. He had not only done wrong, but he had been found out. That was the unpardonable sin, and that was partly the reason the townspeople shunned him like a leper. Marion did not think it was right. It seemed to him that there should be a point somewhere at which the Nemesis of retribution should cease to pursue him, and that was the occasion of his second disagreement with public opinion.

The melody of the Easter bells swelled upon the atmosphere as Marion Burnham stood upon the main village street and watched the worshipers thronging past. They looked at him curiously, as though he were a freak instead of human like themselves. Some regarded him with a sort of contemptuous pity, while others frowned. No one spoke to him. Not a friendly face among all those he had known from his childhood looked into his.

He remembered some of those faces at his trial. Then, when he knew that he deserved punishment and had no claim upon the consideration of honorable men, silly women had brought him flowers in his cell and in their senseless, mawkish sentiment had sought to shield him from merited retribution. Now, when he had paid the penalty and was once more entitled to the recognition of honest men, the women who had showered sympathy upon him knew him not. He had come back to them asking for justice, not sympathy, and they were not interested in the subject.

He turned away from the churchgoers into a bystreet leading to the river. The novelist who creates his situations with an easy disregard for truth would say that fate led his steps in that direction. The theologian would ascribe it to the hand of Providence, which was leading him to a momentous crisis in his career. As a matter of fact, it was only habit which caused him to follow the quiet street to the river's edge—the awakened impressions of years ago, when he was an upright and promising youth and this street was a favorite walk with him and Helen, and it was of Helen the ex-convict and social outcast was thinking as his feet trod the familiar path.

He knew that if there was one person in the world who could find excuse or palliation for his fall it was Helen. Not that she had any reason to remember him kindly, for his treatment of her had been fully consistent with the rest of his foolish, wicked career in the city where he had committed his crime, but somehow he felt that she would not judge him as severely as the townspeople had done. She had been his village sweetheart, and when he secured employment in the city and was drawn into the whirl of dissipation which caused his ruin he straightway deserted her for the tinseled coquettes who were not worthy to touch her hand. She had hidden her heartache beneath her pride, as women do, and soon afterward she left the village. When he was arrested and his associates abandoned him to face a hostile public sentiment alone, his heart yearned for the pure friendship of this girl, but he did not know where she was. And had he known he would never have stooped to seek her recognition in his ignominy. There was that much manhood still left within him.

Upon a fallen tree by the river's side he sat and watched the rippling water flowing at his feet. His brain was in a maddening whirl of remorse, despair and the burning sense of injustice. It seemed as if for him the race was ended. The reformatory theory of punishment was a lie. No man once within the shadow of those prison walls could hope to be treated like a man again, no matter how pure his intentions nor how circumspect the conduct of his after life. Why not end it all forever beneath the rippling waters? Physical self destruction could be no worse than the moral suicide he had already committed. Why continue to live when life could be nothing but a living death?

A sound among the trees near by roused him from his bitter thoughts. To the left the bank of the river was a little higher, rising abruptly several feet above the water. Glancing in the direction of the sound, he saw upon the bank a woman's form. Her back was toward him, but he could see by its graceful curves that the woman was young and of handsome figure. She turned partly toward him and gazed long and earnestly upon the water. A light wrap slipped from her shoulders as she stepped close to the precipitous bank. She gazed long at the water sparkling in the sunlight and then knelt upon the brink, her hands clasped and head bowed in supplication. The grand melody of the Easter anthem was borne clearly to them from the village church.

At length the woman rose slowly from her knees. She turned her face toward the midday sun, and the watcher by the tree started forward with a smothered cry, for in the lone woman upon the bank he recognized his village sweetheart of the old days.

She turned a startled face toward Marion as her ear caught the sound.

SHE KNELT UPON THE BRINK.

The conviction that she was in distress and had come to the river for a terrible purpose overcame his timidity and shame, and he advanced, speaking her name.

"You?" she cried, shrinking away. "What brings you here, of all people? Why do you spy upon me?"

"I did not follow you, Helen. By chance I saw your purpose and came to save you from yourself. Come away from the river, and I will leave you."

"The river is kinder than the world has been. Can't you leave me with my only friend?"

"For God's sake, Helen, tell me what it means! A few minutes ago I was almost tempted to kill myself. But you, why do you harbor such thoughts?"

She turned and looked at him curiously. "Did you really wish to end everything—and why?"

"Have you not heard my story, Helen?"

"I have never heard your name since I left the village."

Marion picked up the wrap and placed it around her shoulders. The sudden relaxation from her nervous tension had left her weak and trembling, and in the expression of her face shame, doubt, fear and distress were mingled with the surprise aroused by Marion's sudden appearance.

"Let us sit upon the log," he said, "and I will tell you the story of a villain."

She listened eagerly to his story as he told it truthfully, without reservation or excuse for himself. "But is that all? Would you give up for that? You are a young man with many years in which to retrieve your good name, and disgrace means so little to a man."

"You do not speak from experience, evidently," said Marion, with a bitter smile. "Will you tell me why you wished to leap out yonder?"

The woman dropped her burning face into her hands, while a tempest of grief shook the frail form. Presently she looked at her companion.

"Why should I tell you? For what does the world cast a woman into a living hell while it forgives all else? What else could transform the hideous face of death into the kindly countenance of a friend? I may not atone for my sin as you can do for yours. No season of punishment can restore me to my lost estate. For one false step I must bear the social scourge forever and be driven to perdition through the darkness of public condemnation. Why should I live?"

Why, indeed? Marion Burnham asked himself the question as with a sudden revulsion of feeling he arose and paced the slope. Helen, the truest of women, she who had always seemed to him to be above reproach, fallen so low! Could it be possible? Was the world, then, all alike—all false, deceitful, cruel?

She watched him a moment as he paced back and forth and then turned again toward the river and dropped her face in her hands. She had read his thoughts aright.

Marion paused and looked at his companion, and a sense of the irony of

HE DREW NEAR AND LAID HIS HAND UPON HER SHOULDER.

the situation struck him like a blow. Who was he, the returned convict, the social pariah, to cast another stone at this poor woman? Was he raging less than an hour ago at the injustice of the world only to be himself unjust? Had she not suffered and atoned for her sin as he had done for his? Were there not some sins of his own for which he had never made atonement? Was she not still a thousand times better than himself, and was he, too, so permeated with unthinking prejudice that he could not grant her the opportunity to redeem herself?

He drew near and laid his hand upon her shoulder. She arose and looked at him, startled and afraid, but he took her shrinking hands in his.

"Helen, a moment ago I condemned you unthinkingly, as the world does. Now I see that it was the same intolerant prejudice which is hounding me, too, it may be to the river bed. You are still infinitely better than I, but the world, I dare say, will treat us about equally. Do you dare face it with me? It may be there is something better for us there—a gleam of hope in the darkness—and, if not, the river will wait for us, and we can seek its refuge any time. Have you the courage to try? I swear to atone to you for all the evil I have done you, even as I have atoned to society for my offense against it. I swear to cherish you and honor no less the fallen woman than I, the fallen man, seek honor. The world is strong and bitter against us, but it may be we will find some friends there, and, if we fail, I swear to love you to the end, and we will seek this spot again together. Dear girl, shall we face it once more?"

She raised her shining eyes to his. "It is worth the trial. I will have courage for your sake."

With clasped hands they watched the friendly water for a moment, then turned to ascend the slope, just bursting into the green of spring. The services in the church were ended, and as they went up to face the world together the glad message of the Easter bells ringing for the close of service swept over them, a triumphant, silvery chime.

His One Song.

Puddy—Why will you stick to that one song? I have heard you sing it for these five years and never knew you to sing any other. I should think you would find it awkward in company when you have sung your song and are unable to respond to the demand for an encore by giving something else.

Duddy—My dear fellow, there never is any demand for an encore.—Boston Transcript.

Made It Even.

"Lawyer Niles was a humor loving attorney in my old Indiana town," said a drummer. "He owed me $1.90 for several months. He was a prominent citizen of the village, and I was the driver of a five seated carryall that made four trips daily between our town and a neighboring city. So I hesitated to run him. One day as I was passing along in front of his office he gladdened my heart by opening the door and stepping out into the road.

"'Guess I owe you somethin,' Parks?' he asked, looking up at me seated on the wagon.

"'Yes, sir. It is $1.90. I remember.'

"'So it is. So it is'—reaching down in his pocket. 'Have you got 10 cents about you?'

"Of course I had, and as I reached down into my corduroys for the dime I saw visions of the $2 bill that would soon be asleep in my inside pocket. Truth to tell, I was overjoyed, for seldom before had I been in such pressing need for additional money as I was on that particular day. I found the change and gave it to Niles, who coolly put it in his pocket and walked back toward his office without giving me a cent.

"'Thanks,' said he rather unfeelingly as he pulled out a fresh cigar and lit it with exasperating imperturbability. 'Thanks. That'll make it an even $2 now.'"—Detroit News-Tribune.

Scientific Safe "Cracking."

In the experiments made in a burglarious way, among others, a $3,000 square safe of the most approved construction was attacked by inserting in the crevice about the locked door 4 8-10 ounces of nitroglycerin, and in eight minutes after the operation of loading was begun the charge was fired, with the result that the whole of the jamb below the door was blown out and a hole made in the door of sufficient size to admit the hand and arm, while the doors and divisions of the interior compartments were completely shattered. On repeating the operation with 4½ ounces of forcite dynamite the door was completely torn off.

Among experiments made to demonstrate the resistance of structures to attack by a mob was one upon a safe 20 inches cube, with walls 4¾ inches thick, made up of plates of iron and steel, which were re-enforced on each edge so as to make it highly resisting, yet when a hollow charge of dynamite 9½ pounds in weight and untamped was detonated on it a hole three inches in diameter was blown clear through the wall, though a solid cartridge of the same weight and of the same material produced no essential effect.—Popular Science Monthly.

A Cautious Man.

The familiar saw that no man can be a hero to his valet was illustrated to me the other day in an amplified and peculiar form. It was while sitting with a man of affairs that his stenographer entered, saying that a certain other man desired to speak to my acquaintance over the telephone. "Take it," said my man and forthwith picked up his extension machine, through which he talked with the man at the other end, the conversation including matters of finance, politics and personal business of a most familiar and confidential sort. He didn't mind me at all—I didn't count. We continued our conversation, and just as I was ready to leave the stenographer entered with several sheets of manuscript, which she laid on the desk.

"That goes on file," said my man. "I invariably have a record kept of my telephone talks, and I've found it to pay. While I talk the stenographer holds the main line and puts it down." I made up my mind that if I had anything particular to say to that man hereafter I'd tell him on the street or in some place other than his office.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Restaurant Thieves.

"Why don't you use after dinner coffee spoons?" asked a woman at a first class up town restaurant of the proprietor the other evening, finding it somewhat inconvenient to use a large spoon with her small cup. "We did have them when we first opened," answered the proprietor. "We had six dozen, but they gradually disappeared until now only three are left, and we consider it more economical to use the larger spoons, for which people do not seem to have such a fancy."

At many restaurants when a glass of claret or sherry is called for it is served in a tiny decanter. These miniature bottles are very attractive. They seem to appeal, as many small things do, to the taste of many people. One man who visits now and again many different restaurants boasts that he has over two dozen of these pretty little decanters. He doesn't say how he came by them, but he didn't purchase them.—New York Times.

A British Army Corps.

The British army corps as nominally constituted numbers 36,259 officers and men. A large number of these are "technical" troops, in charge of the pontoons, field telegraph, railway appliances, balloons, field batteries and field hospitals. Eliminating all of these technical troops, the strength of a division in infantry, cavalry and artillery is 9,449 men, with 18 guns; of an army corps, 30,799 men, with 102 guns.

From Bad to Worse.

She—I would like to call you by your Christian name, love, but Tom is so hateful and common, you know. Haven't you some pet name?

He—N-no, I—er—haven't.

She—Are you always known as Tom among your friends?

He (brightening up)—No, the boys call me "Shorty."—Harlem Life.

China boasts a breed of dog which is virtually known in all occidental lands. The "sleeve puppy," as the tiny creature is styled, is so diminutive that it can with ease be carried in the baggy sleeve of the Chinese overgarment.

WASN'T AFRAID.

But He Wasn't Looking For Any Trouble Either.

Prosecuting Attorney Wheeler Campbell was in an unusual predicament Saturday. He was prosecuting a peace warrant in the police court. One of the most essential questions to be asked on such occasions is:

"Are you afraid that unless this defendant is restrained by law he will do you some great bodily harm?"

This question he propounded to the prosecuting witness, who was a stalwart man, almost twice the size of the man he had sworn out the peace warrant against.

"Naw, sah, I ain't!" he boldly replied.

"You are not?" asked the attorney in amazement. "Now, wait. Let me ask you the question again, so you'll understand it. Are you afraid of him?"

"No, sah, I a-ain't tow say a'fred o' dat niggah," he sputtered. "I ain't scar'd uh him!"

"Are you afraid he will attempt to do you bodily harm?" tentatively asked the attorney.

"Not ef—ef—not ef I kin git a fa'r showin at 'im, boss!" he said as he glared defiantly at the prisoner.

The spectators here began to laugh. The prisoner's stolid countenance also relaxed into a sinister smile, but the witness contended that he wasn't a bit afraid of the prisoner and didn't seem to care who knew it.

"What did you get this peace warrant for, then?" demanded the attorney.

"I jes' wanted—jes' wanted," he explained, "fo' to show dat niggah dat my 'tentions wuz peacenbly 'nclined, sah."

The court then asked a few questions and found out that the witness was afraid the prisoner would shoot him or do something of that kind, but he wasn't really "afraid" of him. The defendant was accordingly required to execute bond, and at the same time the witness' reputation for fearlessness was unaffected.—Paducah Sun.

Handicapped.

"He has a wonderful command of language for so young a man."

"Yes," answered Senator Sorghum.

"And a taste for economic studies."

"I've noticed it."

"And remarkable self possession in facing an audience."

"Remarkable."

"I shouldn't be surprised if he became a great politician."

"I doubt it. He's liable to keep so busy thinking thoughts and talking language that he'll forget all about the necessity of getting in line with the folks who are doing the investing."—Washington Star.

None of It For Jonesy!

Bibbs—How is it Joues has thrown up South Africa? I thought he volunteered.

Dibbs—So he did, but he altered his mind.

Bibbs—What made him do that?

Dibbs—He got to know that his mother-in-law was going out as a nurse.—Pick-Me-Up.

His Undoubted Privilege.

Impartial Spectator (at dog fight)—That under dog doesn't seem to be a match for the other, but I don't wonder you sympathize with him. That's human nature.

Excited Individual—Sympathize with him? Thunder! He's my dog!—Chicago Tribune.

Not Acting His Part.

Customer — Gracious! How loud mouthed and domineering that man is! Is he a member of the firm?

Salesman—Yes; he's the silent partner.—Philadelphia Press.

Probable Reason.

Harold—I wonder why Proning insists on comparing Miss Perseful to a fountain.

Robert—Because she's so gushing, I guess.—Yonkers Herald.

Increasing Anxiety.

"This don't worry button is a fraud."

"In what respect?"

"Why, every fellow that sees it worries me by wanting me to give it to him."—Chicago Record.

Ingenuity.

"This paper says you should never cut a pie with a cold knife."

"I never do. If I haven't a hot knife I eat the whole pie."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

A Bureaucrat.

Mrs. Wunder—I understand your husband holds a government position.

Mrs. Parvenoo—Yes, he is in the chiffonier of statistics.—Baltimore American.

Look of Hair, For Instance.

"What's a souvenir, Aunt Ann?"

"Oh, it's anything you keep so long that you can't remember where you got it."—Indianapolis Journal.

Show This to the Next Tormentor.

After a man passes 40 he should do less for boon agents and more for himself.—Atchison Globe.

An Epicure.

Judge—Have you anything to say, prisoner?

Prisoner—Only this, your honor, that if I'm convicted I should like to be sent to jail as soon as possible, so as not to be late to dinner!—Heitere Welt.

PYTHIAS WAS IN LUCK.

An Unusual Comment on a Very Touching Story.

"Pa," asked a North Side boy, "who was Pythias?"

"Oh, he was a fellow that lived long, long ago in a country where there was a cruel king. This king had sentenced a man to death, and the condemned asked to be allowed to go home and say goodby to his wife, but the king wouldn't let him out because he could not give bail. Along about that time Pythias stepped up and said he would consent to be executed in the other fellow's place if the latter didn't return on time. So they let him out for four hours, and Pythias put on the handcuffs. Along about 15 minutes before it was time for Damon, who was Pythias' running mate, to return Pythias began to have that tired feeling. At ten minutes before the hour set for the beheading Pythias stood on his other leg and said, 'I'll bet $3 Damon's wife will keep him so long at the door saying goodby that he won't be back in time.'

"But nobody would take the bet. Then the king and the people he had invited got out behind the courthouse, and Pythias was led around so there wouldn't be any delay when the performance was to begin. It was then 3:58, and Pythias began to think he was up against it.

"'This is the last time I'll ever do anybody a favor of this kind,' he said.

"'It's beginning to look that way,' says the kind. He was a ruler who enjoyed a joke.

"In about a minute more the time limit would expire. Pythias was beginning to feel like a man who lives in the suburbs and is two blocks from the station when the last train is due. The executioner ran his thumb along the edge of his ax, and the king got hold of the telescope, so he could register all right when the thing was done. But just then Damon came back, running with all his might, and the king was so overcome with admiration for him that he was pardoned right there."

After the child had thought hard for a moment he said:

"Gol, pa, wasn't it lucky for Pythias that the cable didn't happen to break or the bridge didn't get swung when Damon was coming back?"—Chicago Times-Herald.

Curiosity.

"I never saw anything like a woman's curiosity," said Mr. Blykens, as he gave the storm door a push. "Women will take up time and ask questions just for the sake of interrogatory exercise. They'll plunge into the abstruse domain of the law of chance and expect a man to deliver a Huxley or Herbert Spencer opinion offhand."

"What has happened?"

"A woman out there just asked me to please tell her which side of the crossing the car was going to stop on."—Washington Star.

Considerate Young Women.

Twigley—I don't think the Sands girls read the funny papers.

Snapleigh—Why?

Twigley—Well, I was up there pretty late the other evening, and when I said, in thanking Miss Kate for singing for me, that her singing quite carried me away, none of them said she ought to have sung earlier in the evening.—Detroit Free Press.

Felt Cheap.

The Duck—That makes us look like 30 cents.—Types.

Taking a Mean Advantage.

"Why did you permit Razzleton to do all the talking when you and he happened to call on Miss Billions at the same time?"

"Because I rather liked the girl and wanted the field to myself next time.'—Chicago Times-Herald.

Sure Sign.

Tess—She's getting old. There's no denying that.

Jess—Why do you think so?

Tess—She complains that the styles in hats and gowns are not as pretty as they used to be.—Philadelphia Press.

One of Them.

"Look here," said the approached, "I gave you 10 cents not five minutes ago. Now you are at me again."

"I'm such an absentminded beggar," said the mendicant apologetically.—Philadelphia North American.

Her Lack of Experience.

The Poet's Wife—They say that poetry is a drug on the market.

The Poet—Nonsense! If you'd ever sold any poetry and bought any drugs, you'd know the difference.—Harlem Life.

Foolish.

Rivers—I froze my foot going home in the street car the other night.

Brooks—That was an idiotic thing to do. My feet froze, too, but I didn't freeze them.—Chicago Tribune.

Duty and Habit.

The Cop—If I did me duty, I'd run you in.

The Protesting Citizen—Oh, don't go out of your way on my account.—Philadelphia North American.